

MACBITER

Copy rights and wrongs

He may have written a book 20 years ago that no-one's ever heard of, but now that Apple has brazenly nicked the name of it, **MacBiter** is in a litigious mood

I expect you've seen the current TV ad campaign for Apple's Intel Macs. The ads are so relentlessly modern in style that I can't actually remember them too well, but one thing I did notice was that the annoying Intel Inside four-note (G-C-G-D) chime, featured in every other ad for Intel, is missing.

This puzzles me. Either Intel is so very happy to have Apple onboard that it has willingly forgone the chime, or Apple has paid a cartload of extra money for Intel's chips on the provision that it doesn't have to spoil its ads with this naff coda. This is a mystery for which we may never be furnished with an adequate answer.

Far more to the point, for me, is the careless use of the name 'MacBook' for the notebook Apple has brought out while it readies the new-age PowerBooks. Here I must reveal what you ought to know in any case, but almost certainly don't: the very first book about the Macintosh computer to be published in the UK was co-authored by me and rejoiced in the title – you guessed it – *MacBook*. It was published in 1985, sold perhaps two dozen copies, and was never heard of again.

I don't think it was a bad effort; my co-author and I covered just about all the software packages then available for the Mac. This was not a lot in those days, but it did include Microsoft Word (see below), Multiplan, ThinkTank, MacPaint and MacDraw, and we speculated rather touchingly on the likelihood of a colour Mac in the near future. We affirmed our faith in the ivory-coloured midget widget – and we weren't wrong, were we? And above all we were the first to write a book about the Mac. How many have been published since?

BANG TO RIGHTS

But that's not the point. The point is that, in this age of everybody suing everybody else for alleged breach of trademark copyright – and Apple is always in the front rank here – where does this load of Americans get off, imagining they can just use this established title with impunity, or at least

without some remuneration?

When Apple coined the code name 'Dylan' for an earlier version of the Mac OS, it received a letter from Mr Zimmerman's attorneys requiring them to cease and desist on pain of substantial damages. I also seem to remember that on that occasion Cupertino caved in and changed the name to Ocelot or something.

Apple may argue that MacBook is the perfect name for an Apple notebook and would have been brought in years ago were it not for the necessity of keeping IBM happy by using the word 'power' (for PowerPC processor). This requirement no longer having to be met, the company can now revert to the name the gadget should have had all along. To this I would

yours truly right up there with a big bag of brazils – Apple already owes a big debt to these characters, a debt compounded by this clear case of latter-day plagiarism.

It should do the decent thing and brass up, before I have to place the matter in the hands of Sue, Grabbit and Runne.

WORD UP

In the Beginning was Word (see above). I'm not sure when the first PC version appeared – about 1982-83 is my guess – but this venerable word processor was the second (after Apple's own MacWrite) to become available for the Mac. Version 1.0 appeared shortly after the Mac itself, in early 1985, and I used it. To compose this column today, I am using version 11.0

• You can't set Page Setup defaults, although it says you can. (Bill, I don't use and never have used US Letter size. I'm English.)

• Select a single paragraph and try changing it to italic. It will change, and so will the entire document. The same goes for bold, but oddly, not for small caps. Make one of these changes and the whole damn thing follows suit. Try a format change – centred, ranged left, ranged right – and the same thing happens. There's a cure: pull an Undo after the switch and everything will settle down. However, the next time you open the document, the changes will have vanished. The only way to make character and typestyle changes that can be applied without startled cries of "what the f***?" is to use stylesheets.

X RATED

This nonsense is actually an improvement on its immediate predecessor, Word X, which, to all of the above, added the distressing feature of falling over without warning from time to time.

Since for all its faults Microsoft is perfectly capable of writing a powerful, stable and bug-free word processor – after all, it did it magnificently with Word 5.1 – one can only assume that the company has grown so lazy and complacent about its products that it actually doesn't bother to beta-test them any more, not even a flagship product such as Word (that's flagship as in, "after the smoke had cleared, it was seen that the flagship had sunk at her moorings"). But these are not subtle bugs that appear only under arcane circumstances; they are ridiculous, bleeding obvious bugs. How the hell could any competent tester overlook the typestyle glitch mentioned above?

I never thought that the day would come, but I'm in the market for a switch. **CS**



make no argument at all; it makes perfect sense.

More cogently, Apple might protest that nobody has ever heard of our book. Nevertheless, it exists (I retain a single, yellowed copy as Exhibit A), and ignorance is no excuse. Apple may claim that it is not comparing like with like, that in no way can a computer called MacBook affect the sales of a book called *MacBook*, especially since said book has been out of print for 20 years. To which I would reply, members of the jury, that since the survival of the Mac in the precarious pre-desktop publishing days of the mid-80s quite clearly depended on the fervent evangelism of a few nutters – with

(Word 2004). Microsoft, the world's largest IT corporation, has therefore had over 21 years and 10 version iterations to get it right. It hasn't.

I've actually been in a bit of a rage about Word's vicissitudes for several months now, ever since I reluctantly switched from the early-90s version 5.1, as this excellent but ancient program is not carbonised and refuses OS X compliance except under Classic mode, and Classic is itself under a death sentence. Believe me, I wouldn't have moved otherwise.

I have so far counted over 30 serious bugs that I listed, in best nerdlent reviewer mode. But I won't bother with the full list as two examples will suffice.